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XXV.—SOURCE AND ANALOGUES OF *HOW A
MAN MAY CHOOSE A GOOD WIFE
FROM A BAD.*

From Langbaine's time it has been usual to consider the play *How a Man May Choose a Good Wife from a Bad* as drawn directly from Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, book III, novel 5. But Riche had translated this novel¹ and made it the sixth history of his *Farewell to Military Profession* some years before the drama appeared, and, as Riche's translation was no doubt easily accessible, the author of the play is more likely to have used his version than the Italian. It would be hard to decide which is the immediate source, however, for the double reason that Riche usually follows his original almost phrase by phrase, occasionally enlarging a compressed Italian expression into what amounts to an explanation or illustration of the original, and that, where the author of *How a Man May Choose* has followed his source closely, he is so far from copying the language that

¹Koeppel, *Studien zur Geschichte der italienischen Novelle*, pp. 48, 49. Koeppel (p. 98) also considers the story in Greene's *Penelope's Web* called "Penelope's Tale" an adaptation of this same story of Cinthio. Greene's *Never too Late* and the verse tale *How a Marchande dyd hys Wyfe Betray* (Hazlitt, *Early Popular Poetry*, vol. 1) likewise deal with the ungrateful courtesan who has been preferred to the patient wife, but neither is closely related to the Cinthio story with its addition of the sleeping-potion motive. *How a Marchande dyd hys Wyfe Betray* was apparently better known under the title *A Pennyworth of Wit*. In the story of similar title, *A Groatsworth of Wit*, and in various other pamphlets published as Greene's at the time of his death and purporting to be autobiographical, the treacherous courtesan is frequently treated. On the ground that it may be closely related to *The Bristowe Merchant*, the lost play of Ford and Dekker, Prof. Bang has recently reprinted in his first volume of *John Fordes dramatische Werke* Dekker's *Penny-wise, Pound-foolish* (1631), the first part of which is based on *How a Marchande dyd hys Wyfe Betray*, with hints perhaps from Greene's *Never too Late*.

his phrasing may as well be his own translation as his adaptation of Riche's. But the slight evidence is all in favor of his borrowing from Riche. For instance, where Cinthio reads, "Aselgia . . . indusse un suo drudo a ruelare a parēti di Agata, che il marito auelenata l'hauena,"¹ we find in Riche :

"Wherfore she reveiled his speeches unto a ribalde of hers, such a one as supplied her want of that which Gonsales alone, nor ten suche as he were able to satisfie her withall, and induced hym to appeache hym for that facte. . . . This companion accused Gonsales upon his owne wordes unto the freendes of Agatha," etc.²

This "ribalde" rather than Cinthio's simple "un suo drudo" would likely suggest the character of Brabo in *How a Man May Choose*, servant, paramour, and constant attendant of the courtesan, who protects her from the husband's anger and finally secures his arrest at her command. Of course, however, such a character as Brabo was a familiar attendant of the courtesan on the stage.³

I should ordinarily think that no detailed demonstration of the fact that the author of *How a Man May Choose*

¹ *Hecatommithi*, Venice, 1608, p. 303.

² *Farewell to Military Profession*, Shakespeare Society, p. 172.

³ Pilia-Borsa of *The Jew of Malta*, for example, is very similar to Brabo and may have contributed something to the character, all the more as the story of how the servant of the Jew fell in love at first sight with the courtesan, who desired solely to fleece him, of how he spent money upon her and betrayed his master for her, confessing the murders of his master and himself, and of how he was brought immediately before the judges by the courtesan and her man (III, 1; IV, 4; V, 1), has some minor points similar to *How a Man May Choose* and not found in Riche. But the earliest known edition of *The Jew of Malta* is that of Heywood in 1633, and an acceptance of Fleay's conjecture that Heywood about 1632 added to "the scenes with Bellamira and Pilia Borza" would render it probable that these incidents in *The Jew of Malta* owe something to *How a Man May Choose*.

derived his plot from Cinthio or Riche was called for, especially as he was a minor dramatist writing at a time when there was little effort at originality of plot. But Prof. Schelling, whose opinion is weighty, in his recent *Elizabethan Drama*¹ says of *How a Man May Choose*:

“The source of this story—which seems too obviously a matter of every-day experience to search for at all—has been found in Cinthio and duly recorded. Its atmosphere is, however, wholly English, and to those who retain the slightest faith in the possibility that two very ordinary men may say the obvious without incurring, either of them, the imputation of plagiarism this parallel may be regarded as negligible.”

The claim for an English atmosphere may be admitted if we allow that much of the machinery of the play—the poisoning, the tomb, etc.—reflects the Italian source. For the author of *How a Man May Choose* has placed his scene in London instead of Seville, has expanded the faithful wife into a Patient Grissil, has darkened the villainy of the husband after the manner of the domestic tragedy, has multiplied the characters and changed their names, and has developed characters barely mentioned into full comic types, for which hints may have been gathered from various English sources. For instance, Old Lusam of *How a Man May Choose*, who speaks always as an echo of Old Arthur, reminds one of the man in *Tales and Quicke Answeres* (Hazlitt, LIX) who varies his actions to suit every criticism; of Blanuel in *An Humorous Day's Mirth*, who responds to compliments with an exact echo; and of various characters in the drama, like Stephen in *Every Man in his Humour*, who often merely echo their mentors,—though Old Lusam and the justice with his meaningless syllogisms are remarkably fresh comic types.

¹ Vol. I, pp. 331, 332.

In spite of the fact that the general motive of the Cinthio-Riche story and *How a Man May Choose* is obvious and a "matter of every-day experience," as Prof. Schelling says, an outline of the parallels between the two will prove, I think, that the story as the source of the play is hardly "negligible," while the few passages that seem worth citing strengthen the claim of Riche as the immediate source. At any rate, the fact that the author of *How a Man May Choose* follows his source, and at times very closely, not only in his central figures and incidents but often in sentiments and details of characterization, cannot fail to be of interest in an estimate of his drama.¹

Both story and play open with an account of a husband who has grown tired of his beautiful and virtuous wife, and the story lays the foundation for the characterization of these figures in the play. According to Riche, Gonsales, the husband, was "so variable and so unconstant, that he suffered hymself to be ruled wholy by his passions," and "waxing wearie of love, grewe to desire chaunge." Young Arthur, the husband in *How a Man May Choose*, declares that his "ranging pleasures love variety." Both wives are devoted, deaf to the entreaties of their lovers, ready to excuse their husbands' neglect and unfaithfulness. Agatha of Riche's story says that she would not bar Gonsales of "that libertie, whiche either the custome of the corrupted

¹ Among the many additions to Riche's story, one scene of the play is somewhat similar to the kindred *How a Marchande dyd hys Wife Betray*. After the courtesan of *How a Man May Choose*, learning that Young Arthur is a criminal, casts him off and seeks his arrest, he meets his neglected wife as he flees from justice, and she proves solicitous for his welfare and safety. In the story, the merchant, in order to test the loyalty of the courtesan on whom he has lavished his wealth to the neglect of his wife, pretends to have lost his property and to be a fugitive from justice. The courtesan drives him from her door, but his wife receives him with joy and is willing to shield him from punishment.

worlde, or the priviledge that men had usurped unto themselves, had given unto them." And Mistress Arthur tells Young Arthur,

"If you delight to change, change when you please,
So that you will not change your love to me."

In both cases the wife's lover forms throughout in his devotion a contrast with the husband, and tests the wife's faithfulness in the extremes of the husband's unfaithfulness. The "scholer of phisicke" in the story is both the wife's lover and the husband's friend and confidant. The author of *How a Man May Choose* has expanded this scholar of physic and his procress into Young Lusam, the friend and confidant of the husband; Anselm, the wife's lover; and Fuller, Anselm's friend, who is skilled in drugs and who instructs the lover in wooing.

With this situation in the two homes, the courtesan appears on the scene. In each case the husband suddenly conceives a violent passion for her, immediately forms the purpose to make away with his wife, administers in her food a sleeping potion which he supposes to be poison,—the details vary here in the two accounts,—and in an exceedingly short time marries the courtesan.

On the night following the funeral of the wife, the lover visits the tomb. Just as he enters, the wife revives, with the cry, "Where am I?" and expresses her terror and amazement at being in the tomb. Then each lover, in order to urge his claim, stresses his love, his service in reviving the woman, and the husband's treachery and unfaithfulness. The wife checks his words of love, declaring her readiness to put herself under his protection, but swearing, in the words of Agatha,—

"But if your meanyng perchance bee, that the losse of myne honestie should bee the rewarde and hire for your

paines, I dooe beseche you to departe hence out of this tounbe, and to leave me here enclosed ; for I had rather dye here, thus buried quicke through the cruettie of my housband, then through any such compassion or pitie to save my life, with the losse of myne honour and good name,”¹

and in the words of Mistress Arthur—

“ So your demand may be no prejudice
 To my chaste name, no wrong unto my husband,
 No suit that may concern my wedlock’s breach,
 I yield unto it ; but
 To pass the bounds of modesty and chastity,
 Sooner will I bequeath myself again
 Unto this grave, and never part from hence,
 Than taint my soul with black impurity.”²

Then the lover, promising to press his suit no more, conducts the woman to his own home.

The husband of both story and play, unable to keep his new wife in bounds, upbraids her for her treatment of him, and, after a quarrel in which he compares her with his former wife, is finally led to confess that he killed his wife for her. Through the courtesan’s information he is arrested, and on his own public confession is condemned to die. At the moment of the execution, however, the real wife appears, and the mystery of the sleeping potion is explained. Agatha rescues her husband with the declaration,

“ Sir, Gonsales, whom you have condemned and commaunded to be put to death this daie, is wrongfully condemned ; for it is not true that he hath poysoned his wife, but she is yet alive, and I am she : therefore, I beseche you, give order that execution maie be staied, since that your sentence grounded upon a false enformation and confession,

¹ *Farewell Mil. Prof.*, p. 170.

² Hazlitt’s *Dodsley*, vol. ix, p. 71.

is unjust, as you maie plainly disceerne, by me beyng here.”¹ Mistress Arthur’s plea is similar :

“ This man’s condemn’d for pois’ning of his wife ;
His poison’d wife yet lives, and I am she ;
And therefore justly I release his bands.”²

Each lover proclaims the great virtue of the woman who has withstood his love, and the chastened husband, acknowledging his fault, returns to her.

To my mind, the source of *How a Man May Choose* not only is not negligible for an understanding of the play itself, but takes on an added interest in view of the influence of the play. For one thing, the influence on stage-craft was probably considerable. Jonson, in the last intermean of *The Magnetic Lady*, speaks of the demand that “ some unexpected and new encounter break out to rectify all, and make good the conclusion.” The resolution of the complicated plot of a comedy or tragicomedy by the saving of a condemned man’s life or the return of one supposed to be dead, spread in the drama and was employed with every variation. Certainly this was due in part to *How a Man May Choose* and to the plays immediately imitating it, though the rescue motive in other forms was of course not unknown earlier.³ It is at least a striking coincidence that, probably very soon after *How a Man May Choose* appeared, Shakespeare revived in *Measure for Measure* the very similar motive of *Promos and Cassandra*, also derived from Cinthio.

¹ *Farewell Mil. Prof.*, p. 173.

² Hazlitt’s *Dodsley*, vol. ix, p. 94.

³ Cf. *Damon and Pithias*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Case is Altered*, for the rescue from death, and *Much Ado* for the revival motive. Greene’s *James IV* with its theme of the faithful wife who is supposedly slain at the instigation of the King, her husband, in order to leave him free in the pursuit of a new love, and who returns in time to rescue her husband from the vengeance of her father is especially interesting as a forerunner of *How a Man May Choose*.

The number of plays actually indebted to *How a Man May Choose* is probably large. Prof. A. H. Quinn has shown that in many particulars the plot of *The Fair Maid of Bristow* follows that of *How a Man May Choose*. The relation of these two plays, however, is complicated by the fact that in some points not found in *How a Man May Choose*, *The Fair Maid* resembles *The Dutch Courtezan*. Marston's play itself belongs more or less superficially to this same group, for the plays also have many elements in common that go back to *How a Man May Choose*; but the common elements not drawn from *How a Man May Choose* are too numerous to be accidental, and leave us no choice but to believe that one play drew from the other or, less probably, both from the same source. Of *The Dutch Courtezan* Prof. Schelling remarks that, "although the chief personages of his [Marston's] main plot, even to the two old fathers, correspond, person for person, to those of *The Fair Maid* and *How a Man May Choose*, the subject is given a new turn by making the whole plot hinge on Franceschina the courtesan's demand that Malheureux kill Freevill, the husband, who is his best friend, as the means at once to gain Franceschina's love and avenge the wrong which she conceives that she has suffered by Freevill's neglect."¹ As Koeppel has pointed out,² Marston's main motive is drawn from Bandello's novel, *The Countess of Celant*, translated in Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* and in Fenton's *Tragical Discourses*; and this fact would easily account for the new turn of which Prof. Schelling speaks, and explain the emphasis on the dashing courtesan and the two friends who are her lovers. But resemblances in this very matter of the courtesan and her intrigues furnish the

¹ *Elizabethan Drama*, vol. I, p. 334.

² *Quellen-Studien zu den Dramen Ben Jonson's, John Marston's, und Beaumont u. Fletcher's*, pp. 28, 29.

best basis for connecting *The Dutch Courtezan* and *The Fair Maid* with each other as well as with *How a Man May Choose*, in spite of the fact that the crucial demand of Franceschina is lacking in *The Fair Maid*. It is possible that both Marston and the author of *The Fair Maid* knew *The Countess of Celant*; for, although in the most important points *The Dutch Courtezan* is closer to *The Countess of Celant* than is *The Fair Maid*, in one or two very minor points the case is reversed.¹ But the plays have too much in common that is found in neither *The Countess of Celant* nor *How a Man May Choose* to make it credible that the two authors worked their sources independently. The question remains, which play was the earlier.

Prof. Schelling's implication throughout is that *The Fair Maid* is prior to *The Dutch Courtezan*; indeed he places *The Fair Maid* about 1602. But Prof. Quinn, following Fleay, shows that the play was probably first performed in October, 1604. Except for the fact that Prof. Wallace claims to have proof, which he does not adduce, that *The Dutch Courtezan* was acted late in 1602,² I should say that Marston's play could not well be referred to a date earlier than 1603; for Crawford in his *Collectanea* (vol. II) leaves

¹ For instance, in *The Fair Maid* the courtesan is not deserted by the first lover as in *The Dutch Courtezan*, but she dismisses him for a new lover and desires his death because he has insulted her. In *The Countess of Celant* the first adventure of the courtesan with the two friends, a portion not used by Marston, is similar to this. A single resemblance like this, commonplace and lacking in the support of details, is not sufficient to indicate borrowing. Again, the naturalness of seeking poison from a physician may account for a commonplace resemblance of *The Fair Maid* to Riche's novel in a detail not found in *How a Man May Choose*. In both, the husband asks a doctor for poison, confessing that he wishes to poison his wife. The doctor, as his friend, seemingly consents, but, as lover of the wife, thwarts the plan.

² *The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 1597-1603*, p. 75, notes 1 and 2.

little doubt that for the play Marston drew largely on Florio's *Montaigne*, which was not published till 1603.¹ Even so, there would be ample time for the production of *The Dutch Courtezan* between the appearance of Florio's translation and the first performance of *The Fair Maid*.

The strongest reason for considering *The Fair Maid* the debtor to *The Dutch Courtezan* instead of the reverse is found in the treatment in the two plays of the motives showing kinship with *The Countess of Celant*. Certainly Marston borrowed his main motive directly ; the bold outlines of his plot could never have been suggested by *The Fair Maid*. His treatment is simple, direct, and in the main close to Bandello's story. Corroborative evidence is found in the fact that the sub-plot of *The Dutch Courtezan* is drawn from Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, to which Marston would almost certainly have gone for *The Countess of Celant*. On the other hand, it is only after analysis that one discerns in *The Fair Maid* elements of the Italian story, and these are obscured and overlaid, as might be expected in an indirect borrowing. An analysis of the two plays in relation to their sources, on the basis that *The Dutch Courtezan* drew from *The Countess of Celant* and *How a Man May Choose*, and that *The Fair Maid* combined *How a Man May Choose* and *The Dutch Courtezan*, will make clear, I think, the relation of the two plays to each other and the gradual development of the complicated plot of *The Fair Maid*.

The Dutch Courtezan borrows from *The Countess of Celant* the courtesan's demand that her new lover kill a former lover, who is his friend, and the new lover's discovery of the plot to his friend. The supposed murder of the first lover

¹ Florio's translation was entered in the *Stationers' Register* as early as 1599, however, and Marston may have had access to the manuscript.

by the second in *The Dutch Courtezan* is only slightly similar to the murder of one of the two friends by a third party in *The Countess of Celant*. These elements, however, form the central thread of Marston's plot, and in borrowing from *How a Man May Choose* he has merely filled in and changed the tragedy to a comedy. From *How a Man May Choose*, Marston has added to the main characters of *The Countess of Celant* story the virtuous woman set over against the wanton, and the two old fathers; and to the main incidents the lover's declaring to the courtesan, in order to win her favor, that he has done murder for her sake, his immediate arrest at the instigation of the courtesan, the silence of the supposed victim until the murderer is about to be executed, the courtesan's eagerness to secure the execution of her lover, his rescue by the one supposed to be dead, and his quick disillusionment. Marston has, however, completely changed the situations in which these general motives occur by making the supposed victim not the wife but the lover's friend; and the motive of a wife's patient endurance of her husband's infatuation for a courtesan is introduced into *The Dutch Courtezan* only in a weak form—when the courtesan appears before the betrothed of the first lover to torment her with a feigned tale of his preference for herself.

The author of *The Fair Maid* has combined the two friends of *The Dutch Courtezan* and their relation to the courtesan, with the husband of *How a Man May Choose*, who neglects his wife for the courtesan. As Harbart, one of the friends in *The Fair Maid*, has never been a lover of the courtesan, and as Vallenger, the husband, takes the place of one of the friends in the rôle of the second lover, the result is a very complicated series of shifts in the motives of the sources. A brief statement of the essential parts of the action in their relation to the sources will best reveal these shifts and explain their value for the plot.

The Fair Maid opens with a situation drawn from *The Dutch Courtezan* that introduces to us the husband and wife drawn from *How a Man May Choose*. In *The Dutch Courtezan*, Freevill appears in the first scene introducing his friend Malheureux to the courtesan Franceschina, whom he is forsaking for his betrothed. Malheureux censures loose love, and immediately falls a victim to the courtesan's charms. The courtesan, because Freevill has deserted her, demands that Malheureux kill him as the condition of receiving her favor. Later at the home of Freevill's betrothed, where they are attending a masque and dance, the two friends pretend to quarrel, and leave the dance together; Malheureux presumably kills Freevill. Similarly, *The Fair Maid* opens with Challener's inviting his friend Vallenger to meet his betrothed¹ at a fête given at her home, a feature of which is a masque. Vallenger scoffs at love, and yet at first sight of the girl falls madly in love with her. The friends quarrel, leave the dance, and fight. Vallenger is wounded, and later wins the girl, only to mis-treat her for the courtesan ; Challener flees, but returning, on account of his love for the wife, in the disguise of a doctor, he performs the function of the lover of Mistress Arthur in *How a Man May Choose* by nullifying Vallenger's plot to murder his wife. The treatment at this point, however, is quite different in the two plays.

Then the two friends, Sentloe and Harbart, appear to complicate the plot. Harbart attempts to dissuade Sentloe from his love for the courtesan Florence and fails. The courtesan is invited to the wedding of Vallenger, who

¹ In *The Dutch Courtezan* the father of the betrothed has another daughter. In *The Fair Maid* the father has only one daughter, but a stage direction after 1. 53 speaks of his "daughters." Perhaps this is due to the author's association of his father and daughter with Marston's father and daughters.

immediately falls in love with her. As the husband of *How a Man May Choose* invites the courtesan to his home and gives her the place of honor over his patient wife, Vallenger humiliates his wife at the wedding fête to please Florence. Florence now wishes to rid herself of Sentloe, at first casting him off to make way for Vallenger, and finally, as in *The Dutch Courtezan*, planning his death to avenge herself for his insult and scorn upon her dismissal of him. Vallenger, of his own initiative, plans to poison Sentloe; but, as in *The Dutch Courtezan*, Florence employs for her instrument Sentloe's best friend, Harbart, who, under the name Blunt, is playing the serving-man to her in order to watch over his friend and cure him of his infatuation, as Freevill in disguise waits on the Dutch courtesan to effect his plans for disenchanting Malheureux. Meanwhile, the courtesan casts off the now penniless Vallenger, whose father has disowned him because of his abuse of his wife and his plot to poison her. Blunt administers a sleeping potion to Sentloe, and by the ruse of bloodying the unconscious man and the sword of Vallenger, who has fallen asleep near by, fastens the guilt upon Vallenger, at the suggestion of the courtesan.¹ Later Blunt, or Harbart, is accused by the courtesan of being accessory to the murder, and on his own confession is condemned.

In this doubling of pretended murder, the motives of *How a Man May Choose* and *The Dutch Courtezan* are combined. Thus Vallenger, though, like the husband in *How a Man May Choose*, he has deserted his wife for the courtesan and tried to poison her while she is shielding him from the angry father, is condemned to die for slaying the former lover of the courtesan with the sword, as

¹ Prof. Schelling goes astray at this point in telling the story. Cf. *Eliz. Drama*, vol. I, p. 332.

in *The Dutch Courtezan*. The wife's rescue of the husband by appearing after he is condemned in *How a Man May Choose* becomes in *The Fair Maid* an effort to save him by offering herself as a substitute. But the knot is untied, as in *The Dutch Courtezan*, by the first lover of the courtesan, Sentloe, who after hiding out until Vallenger and Harbart are about to be executed, appears in time to save the husband, as in *How a Man May Choose*, and the friend, as in *The Dutch Courtezan*. In the end, the husband is cured of his love for the courtesan and restored to the wife, as in *How a Man May Choose*, and the friend who has been under the spell of the courtesan renounces her, as in *The Dutch Courtezan*.

This combination of motives itself seems to me the very strongest sort of evidence that *The Fair Maid* has as sources both *How a Man May Choose* and *The Dutch Courtezan*. Besides, *The Fair Maid* bears all the marks of a comparatively weak dramatist's effort to combine plots; for, in spite of a fairly successful union of the main elements of *How a Man May Choose* and *The Dutch Courtezan*, there is no real centralization of motives, and many threads are introduced which have little value in the working out of the plot, and which often confuse the author himself. Given the weaker dramatist with the more complicated plot, we are not likely to go wrong in determining the borrower.

Prof. Quinn has given a list of plays similar in treatment to *How a Man May Choose* and *The Fair Maid*, chiefly as regards the matter of the patient wife. Of these *The London Prodigal* shows most decidedly the influence of the motives in the Cinthio-Riche story, though in many respects it is rather dissimilar to all the plays that have been treated. A number of resemblances to *How a Man May Choose* and *The Fair Maid* are pointed out by Prof. Quinn. The similarity of *The London Prodigal* to *How a Man May*

Choose consists in the presence of Weathercock, a character whose echoing of words recalls Old Lusam, in the kindness of a neglected wife on meeting her needy husband whom a spoiled courtesan has spurned, and in her rescue of him as he is about to be arrested for his supposed murder of her. The two fathers of *The London Prodigal* are much nearer to *The Fair Maid* than to *How a Man May Choose*. The father of the girl leads her to change lovers, and the new lover proves a scoundrel while the old one continues his friendship; the father of the husband despairs of the prodigal when he mistreats his wife, and transfers his interest to the girl. The basis of the husband's dismissal by the courtesan—whom we only hear of—is his disinheritance and lack of money, as in *The Fair Maid*. Prof. Quinn, though he does not point out this vague kinship, calls attention to three passages in *The London Prodigal* resembling certain passages in *The Fair Maid*.¹ Again, the fact, though very inconclusive, is possibly worth noting that the wife of *The London Prodigal* is disguised as a "Dutch frow" and is called "tanakin," and that both of these terms are applied to the Dutch courtesan Franceschina. In discussing the authorship of *The London Prodigal*, which he is inclined to attribute to Marston, Mr. C. F. T. Brooke mentions the similarity of the Dutch-English used by these two characters.² It is not improbable that we have in *The London Prodigal* echoes of all three of these plays, so that *The London Prodigal* may have been written after *The Fair Maid*, 1604, and thus in the year of its publication, 1605. But the attempt to fix the date and the relationship of this play to the group is by no means convincing.

¹ *Shakespeare Apocrypha* (ed. Brooke), *The London Prodigal*, III, 3, 303 f.; v, 1, 315 f.; v, 1, 419. *The Fair Maid*, II, 872 f., 571 f., 978. The last of these passages is found in *Fair Em.* (v, 1, 114), with practically the same wording as in *The London Prodigal*.

² *Shakespeare Apocrypha*, p. xxx, n. 1.

The Cinthio-Riche theme in some of its details appears also in Day's *Law Tricks*, published in 1608. Day has altered his material freely, and has practically omitted the motive of the courtesan pitted against the wife. Still the occurrence, with much the same treatment as in *How a Man May Choose*, of a patient and virtuous wife persecuted by her husband, wooed by a lover, supposedly poisoned at the husband's instigation, buried, rescued from the tomb, and finally presented alive in time to save her husband's life and to be reconciled to him, is sufficient to include Day's play in our group. In *Law Tricks* Horatio is both the husband's confidant and the wife's lover, as in Riche. When Count Lurdo, with the connivance of Horatio, has divorced his countess, Horatio takes advantage of the wife's distressed condition to urge his suit, but is always repulsed. She is finally befriended by Horatio's page, who offers her refuge with his parents. The husband commissions the now angered lover to poison the countess, and Horatio administers what he supposes to be poison, but what is only a sleeping potion prepared by the page's father, an apothecary. The page waits at the tomb for the wife's revival, and purposely frightens away Horatio, who, like Anselm in *How a Man May Choose*, has wandered to the tomb in grief and despair. The wife remains concealed after her rescue by the page, and, appearing as a ghost, demands revenge on Horatio. He in turn accuses the husband. The two are summarily condemned by the Duke to be enclosed alive in the tomb with the dead wife; but the wife appears alive, and frees the condemned men with a speech similar to those of Agatha and Mistress Arthur :

“ Justice, great Duke ! giue me my husbands life,
Both his and his ; if your demaund be ‘ Why,’
See, she suruiues for whose death they should die.”

The husband confesses his injustice and is reconciled, while

the page explains his part in the dénouement. The part of Lurdo and Emilia is a sort of substitute for the intrigue with the courtesan, though Lurdo's infatuation does not begin until after the divorce. Emilia, who is both nimble-witted and virtuous, leads Lurdo on till he offers to kill his wife for her and confesses some of his questionable practices ; and the life she promises him, provided she yields to his suit and marries him, strongly recalls what Young Arthur suffers after his marriage to the courtesan. Whether or not Day went back to Riche or Cinthio for some points of his plot, the influence of *How a Man May Choose* seems pretty evident, especially in tone and general spirit.

Chronologically, Middleton's *Blurt, Master-Constable* probably deserves first consideration among the plays indebted to *How a Man May Choose*. But its interest here lies chiefly in the light that its relation to other plays of the group may be able to throw on the question of its interpretation, and so I have reserved it until after a discussion of the related plays. The story of *How a Man May Choose* seems to have been used in *Blurt, Master-Constable* without being very carefully woven into the whole, after Middleton's manner of introducing briefly a popular motive into his plots,¹ and this fact may help to account for "the fatal obscurity of plot" in *Elurt, Master-Constable* of which Ward complains.² Fontinelle's passion for the courtesan Imperia and his expla-

¹ As an instance, compare his use of the motive best known from *Decameron*, III, 3, that of the employment of the most unlikely person in a woman's circle as her unconscious messenger in a love intrigue. The first use of this I have noticed in the drama is in *Twelfth Night* (I, 5; II, 2; III, 1), where Olivia makes Malvolio her messenger. Middleton employs it in *Your Five Gallants* (IV, 2) and in *The Widow*. A similar device occurs in *The Family of Love* (I, 2) and in *The Roaring Girl* (III, 2). The motive was very popular, and has been pointed out in at least *The Fawn*, *The Widow*, *The Devil is an Ass*, and *The Witty Fair One*. Cf. also Chapman's *May Day* (II, 2) and Greene's *Planetomachia*.

² *History of English Dramatic Literature*, vol. II, p. 502.

nation of it on the basis that he loves variety, his suggestion of poisoning his wife, the wife's gentle spirit toward the courtesan and her willingness to share her husband with a rival, the courtesan's softening toward the wife, the wife's rescue of the husband from the death to which he has been condemned for his treatment of her, and the husband's final repentance, are all reminiscent of *How a Man May Choose*, in spite of some changes in the working out of the problem. Bullen, confronted by the inconsistency between the dénouement and this part of the play when interpreted in the most obvious way, has contended, in opposition to Ward, that Fontinelle's sudden passion for the courtesan is feigned and that his treatment of his bride is according to a plan previously arranged between them in order to further their own love.¹ But the very close relation of *Blurt* to other plays of the group, where the points in question are not left in the slightest doubt, would seem to uphold Ward. For example, in *The Fair Maid of Bristow*, the bridegroom, thoroughly in love with his wife, falls suddenly and completely under the spell of the courtesan and disparages his wife to her, and in the wife's attitude to the courtesan there is much to remind one of Middleton's comedy.

Some verbal resemblances will serve to show how closely the lines of treatment sometimes correspond. Fontinelle protests to the courtesan in speaking of his wife Violetta :

“ Now, by the heart of love, my Violet
Is a foul weed, (O pure Italian flower !)
She a black negro, to the white compare
Of this unequalled beauty ? ”²

With this passage compare two from *The Fair Maid*. In

¹ *Works of Middleton*, vol. I, Intro., pp. xxi ff.

² *Blurt, Master-Constable*, v, 2.

one the bridegroom, suddenly enamored of the courtesan, says to her :

“The bee that Sucks the bitter Hemlock flouers,
When that he comes to tast the violet
Doth count his former food as trash and weedes
Thou art the Violet the bitter Hemlock shee.”

And in the other the wife defends her lord by saying,

“Faire Florence is the mistris of his hart,
To her I am but as a Counterfit,
Rather I am a ethyop, . . .”¹

Again, we find Violetta of *Blurt, Master-Constable* pleading with the courtesan in behalf of her husband :

“Prithee, good wench, use him well.

.
If he deserve not to be used well, . . . I'll engage myself, dear beauty,
to thine honest heart.”²

And Anabell says under similar circumstances,

“But yet I pray, for my sake vse him kind,
I am sure heele deserue it at your hands.”³

If these parallel passages from similar situations indicate anything in regard to the influence of *Blurt, Master-Constable* on *The Fair Maid*, it seems plausible to me that the author of *The Fair Maid* was following the interpretation given to *Blurt, Master-Constable* upon the Elizabethan stage, borrowing the ideas because they were associated with the theme with which he was dealing.

It is not alone the influence of this one story from Cinthio

¹ Ll. 318 ff. and 569 ff. This second passage is one of those cited by Prof. Quinn as paralleled in *The London Prodigal*. Cf. *L. P.* v, 1:

“I am no Aethyope,
No wanton Cressed, nor a changing Hellen.”

² V. 2.

³ Ll. 507 f.

or the relative dates of the plays involved that is of interest in the study of this group. For the interrelations of the plays, all except *Law Tricks* published within three years, show the thorough familiarity of the Elizabethan dramatists with the various treatments of a theme, the acceptance of popular motives on the stage as community property, and the general use of popular and telling phrases and figures.¹

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¹The influence of the Cinthio-Riche story was hardly confined to the plays treated. At any rate, the central motives of this group are used extensively in the drama. In *The Puritan*, for example, a man is rescued from the gallows at the last moment by the revival of his supposed victim, who has merely been under the influence of a sleeping potion. Likewise in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Triumph of Love" from *Four Plays in One*, the same situation occurs in a more complicated form. Indeed, the sleeping potion motive, usually combined, as in our plays, with the rescue of a condemned man at the last moment, is of frequent occurrence. For some additional uses of it, not considered closely enough related to the plays discussed in this paper to call for treatment, see Scherer's edition of *Satiropastix, Materialien*, 20, p. xi, and G. C. Moore Smith's edition of *Hymenaeus*, Cambridge, 1908, pp. xii, xiii. Among later plays may be added Sharpham's *Fleire*, Mason's *Muleasses the Turk*, *The Honest Lawyer*, May's *Old Couple*, *The Costly Whore*, Rutter's *Shepherd's Holiday*, Berkeley's *Lost Lady*, and Cartwright's *Siege or Love's Convert*. (Cf. Genest's analyses.) The love philtre in Sidney's *Arcadia*, utilized by Shirley, is a notable parallel. Prof. Stoll, in his *John Webster*, discusses the relation of the later plays, *A Cure for a Cuckold* and *Parliament of Love*, to *The Dutch Courtezan*. Of the two *The Parliament of Love* shows the closer relation to our group. The central motive in the resolution of the plays influenced by *The Dutch Courtezan*, the return or revival of one supposedly killed—usually the quarrel is over an amour and the return is just in the moment to save the life of the condemned opponent, who in most cases has been an intimate friend before the quarrel—was probably as extensively used as any other motive of the group of plays, though here, as in the case of the sleeping potion, I do not mean to imply that there was necessarily any influence exerted by our group. I recall now Webster's *The Devil's Law Case*, Shirley's *Gamester and Wedding*, Rider's *Twins*, Suckling's *Goblins*, May's *Old Couple*, and Carliell's *Deserving Favorite*.